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Oxford Magazine exists as a forum for points of view gratefully received – usually unsolicited – from as wide a variety of authors as possible with interests in Oxford. Don Carleton’s article below offers a wide, by-stander perspective on universities in general from a concerned and seasoned observer of universities with long acquaintance with Oxford.

His theme is cultural division and its consequences. C.P.Snow’s two cultures were of their time. In the 1960s leaders of thought, taste and opinion were often located in the universities and especially in the humanities. In so far as there was a divide between them and the scientists, neither aggression nor open, point-scoring competitiveness seemed to be involved; there was enough common understanding and shared purpose that it did not significantly disrupt university life. Whether elitism and class origins came into it is perhaps another matter. Undoubtedly, the personal interactions facilitated by Oxbridge college membership helped to ensure that life was conducted in a collegiate and relatively civilised manner. In so far that there was any divide this probably reflected our natural and general tendency to seek confirmation from fellow-believers and to see opposites in those with different views.

Don Carleton is identifying an entirely different and new cultural divide that could be said to be both disruptive and uncivilised. It has emerged at a time when life in general has got considerably more complicated. Certainly there has developed a ‘them and us’ attitude between academics and the now large groupings of non-academic professionals without whom no university can operate these days. He suggests that power has swung decisively towards the administrators. There is clear evidence that something is awry in Oxford when academics report that

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they feel increasingly detached, besieged and grudgingly compliant in responding to many of the multiple demands on them and when our sovereign democratic governing body, Congregation, has become dormant.

The trends that Carleton describes are not unique to universities. Very similar stories could surely be told from many institutions such as the NHS, the Civil Service or the BBC. One hypothesis would be that these trends are largely the result of, for want of a better term, excessive complexity. Over time more and more voices have had to be heard and their demands responded to in society and politics. A perverse dynamic may come into play whereby, as increasingly numerous factional concerns achieve their particular aims, those aims will conflict with the concerns and options for more groups in the rest of society. Moreover, as we have come to rely increasingly on digital tools and social media as our sources of information and news perspectives narrow and it gets harder to separate alternative truths (or plain lies) from reality. In any one organisation it is becoming unreasonable to expect that any single person can fully understand and embrace the complexities, while ‘democratic’ collective decision- and policy-making becomes distorted by ill-informed factional loyalties, drawn along increasingly many fault lines in opinion.

Universities are often perceived to be the sources of newly emerging cultural fault lines. But they are also the most dependable available sources of well-founded information, hard evidence and reasoned arguments, which include coverage of new thinking on organizational models applicable to the rest of society. If universities fail to work out ways of dealing with their own cultural divides so as to embrace gulfs in opinion and expertise – follow-

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...and much more

ing principles long associated with civilised academic conduct – their essential natures as universities will be in peril. Moreover, wider society needs to know what skills universities have developed in communicating and explaining their workings not only to their own staff but also to external audiences. The recent débâcle resulting in the resignation of Harvard’s President (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 460, 0th Week, HT 2024) illustrates the costs of failure.

An institution such as a university can only function in a unified way if all sections of the community have equal access to the processes of decision-making. Coordination and integration of staff involvement in university affairs hinges on the ready availability and comprehensiveness of information about university administrative and managerial processes so that non-experts are not excluded. As Gill Evans points out in this issue, the channels of in-

ternal communication in Oxford are heavily dependent on historical precedent – as in the case of the seemingly haphazard contents of the *Gazette* – and have recently become not only fragmented but have, in the laudable cause of reaching “all-staff”, tended to focus on issues of the widest relevance, such as working conditions, at the expense of such areas as governance or high-level policy-making. Only the most regular users of the vast confusion of University websites can master their complexities and recognise their limitations. Overworked and time-starved academics give up in despair in any attempt to access the everyday workings of central administrative offices or committees. Ask yourself this simple question: who among us, outside those actually attending Council meetings, knows anything whatsoever about what happens there? As Bacon saw: “Knowledge is power”.

B.B., T.J.H.

How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation

It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (*i.e.* a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

Questions and replies

Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in *Gazette* in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

Postal votes

Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present (“on the floor”) at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

Flysheets

To generate a flysheet for publication with the *Gazette*, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml>
Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the *Gazette*.
The Congregation website is at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation.
Advice on Congregation procedures is available from the Council Secretariat on request (email: congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk).



Reminders



In response to two recent developments relevant to free speech in universities the following extracts are taken from the 108-page Judgment (dated 5th February 2024) in an Employment Tribunal in which Professor David Miller claimed that he had been unfairly dismissed by the University of Bristol after being accused of antisemitic comments. As Professor Miller is reported to have commented in the Guardian of 6th February 2024: he was “very proud we have managed to establish that anti-Zionist views qualify as a protected belief under the UK Equality Act” – eds.*

The unanimous judgment of the tribunal is:

1. The claimant’s anti-Zionist beliefs qualified as a philosophical belief and as a protected characteristic pursuant to section 10 Equality Act 2010 at the material times.
2. The claimant succeeds in claims of direct discrimination because of his philosophical belief contrary to section 13 Equality Act 2010 in relation to:
 - a. The respondent’s decision to dismiss him on 1 October 2021.
 - b. The respondent’s rejection of his appeal against dismissal on 23 February 2022.
3. The claimant succeeds in his claim for unfair dismissal pursuant to section 98 Employment Rights Act 1996.
4. The claimant succeeds in his claim for wrongful dismissal (failure to pay notice)....

214. We now turn to the **Grainger** criteria.

215. The belief must be genuinely held: To constitute a belief, there had to be a religious or philosophical viewpoint in which the claimant actually believed. It is not enough “to have an opinion based on some real or perceived logic or based on information or lack of information available”: **McClintock v Department of Constitutional Affairs**.

216. The claimant’s beliefs about Zionism, and the basis for those beliefs, are set out comprehensively in his statement. These are things that he has incorporated into his teachings and writings. We conclude that they have played a significant role in his life for many years. We are satisfied that they are genuinely held. It is said by the Respondent that the belief was “not held by the Claimant as a belief or touchstone to his life.” However, that is not the test set out in the first part of **Grainger**. In any event, the beliefs on which he relies did play a significant part in his life.

217. It must be a belief and not an opinion or viewpoint based on the present state of information available: During his evidence the claimant explained that his research into Zionism followed, but helped to reinforce, his beliefs

about Zionism. The claimant is and was a committed anti-Zionist and his views on this topic have played a significant role in his life for many years. His views were deeply held and not amenable to change.

218. His familiarity and expertise in the field of political sociology, propaganda and the Zionist movement was evident during his evidence to the tribunal. For example, when the claimant was cross-examined about a number of works by different academics, whose views are in opposition to the claimant, he confirmed not only that he was aware of them but also that he had read their work.

219. The fact that the claimant did not articulate the fact that he held protected beliefs as an anti-Zionist prior to the appeal does not consign them to opinion or viewpoint. He clearly held anti-Zionist beliefs before, not least, because he often expressed them in a variety of different ways.

220. Belief as to a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour: This is not challenged by the Respondent.

221. It must attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance: The respondent argues that the belief is, in various respects, incoherent and lacks cogency. Coherence and cogency are said to be undermined due to references to the British Mandate, the contradictory nature of what is said to be “inherent racism”, relying upon an “opposition” to something which is ill defined, a selective and partial reading of history and the fact that his beliefs are linked to unsubstantiated views about the extent of discrimination suffered by Jewish people.

** https://www.rllaw.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Judgment_Miller-v-Bristol-Uni_Rahman-Lowe-Solicitors.pdf*

The extracts below are taken from a forensic 155-page Judgment (dated 22nd January 2024) in an Employment Tribunal which found (as described in the THE of 1st February 2024) that Professor Jo Phoenix won her case “because her university failed to protect her from harassment”. She had been dismissed from her university post as professor of criminology; “Professor Phoenix was ruled to have faced a ‘hostile environment’ at the OU and discrimination and harassment from colleagues because of her belief that people cannot change their biological sex”. Professor Phoenix was quoted in the THE article as saying that “she felt her case against the Open University had ‘established the parameters within which debate can take place’, which ‘cuts to the heart of university culture’ as well as showing that institutions have to step in when staff are being harassed”.*

In the course of the Judgment it was noted that (at 504): “In a case of harassment, a decision of fact must be sensitive to all the circumstances. Context is all-important. The fact the conduct is

not directed at the Claimant herself is a relevant consideration, although this does not necessarily prevent conduct amounting to harassment and will not do so in many cases”; (at 218): “We find that the content (labelling the Claimant as hostile to the rights of trans, non binary and gender queer people and demanding disaffiliation of the GCRN from the OU), the signing (having 368 signatures) and the publication of the Open Letter (to the world with the Claimant’s colleagues signatures) had a chilling effect on the Claimant expressing her gender critical beliefs and carrying out gender critical research”; (at 209): “many of the academics who gave evidence said they only signed the Open Letter [an open call for the OU to withdraw its public support for the Gender Critical Research Network that Professor Phoenix co-founded] as a show of solidarity. We find this indicates to the Tribunal that actually there was a gender identity culture where academics in the Claimant’s faculty felt obliged to support the gender identity position.” – eds.

489. Whilst the freedom to hold gender critical belief is protected under section 10(2) as set out in Forstater, the freedom to express or manifest one’s belief even if protected by section 10(2) is qualified under Article 9 of The European Convention on Human Rights (the “Convention”) as contained in “schedule 1- The Articles” to the Human Rights Act 1998”. Article 9 states:

“Freedom of thought, conscience and religion: 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. 2. Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others”.

556. It is worth remembering that the role of the Employ-

ment Tribunal is to determine the case before it. The Employment Tribunal is neutral and does not take any side in the “trans gender debate”. We are to make findings on a balance of probabilities having heard the evidence. It is not our role nor responsibility to make findings on other philosophical beliefs that may contradict the Claimant’s beliefs. We have tried as much as is possible not to do so for that very good reason. Where we have had to make findings on the views of specific individuals who were witnesses before us we have done so knowing that those views were conveyed in response to questions asked and in the context of the events and acts that took place (or not as the case may be) in relation to the Claimant.

560. Applying Grainger to the parts of the Claimant’s belief that the Respondent disputes, the Employment Tribunal concludes that the part of paragraph 6 of GoC1 that says “that trans people should be able to live their lives with dignity and in safety, and free from unlawful discrimination and harassment” is not a belief but an opinion as it is likely that should it conflict with the Claimant’s actual belief that sex is immutable, the Claimant’s belief that sex is immutable would take priority as she says in the rest of paragraph 6 of GoC1. The Tribunal also concludes that paragraph 7 of GoC1 is not the Claimant’s belief but an explanation of why the Claimant believes what she believes. Paragraph 8 of GoC1 also does not state the Claimant’s beliefs but explains how those beliefs impact on her life.

561. We consider that the Claimant’s beliefs fall within the Grainger criteria.

** <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Joanna-Phoenix-v-The-Open-University-Employment-Tribunal-Reserved-Judgment.pdf>*

The Two New Cultures

DON CARLETON

Over sixty years ago, C. P. Snow identified a hidden change of great potential harm¹. He noted that ‘scientists’ (engineers, mathematicians, medicals) were locked in their own concerns and knew nothing of Shakespeare, the ballet and the opera. Self-styled ‘Intellectuals’ (those who studied history, literature and the arts) thought only of those things and knew nothing of science. Scientists were denigrated by intellectuals for their lack of the arts. Most intellectuals took a bizarre pride in their lack of numeracy and ignorance of such matters as Boyle’s Law. Snow called it ‘the two cultures’.

Snow was right to bring the matter to attention, but he perhaps missed a more profound change, a more serious divergence of cultures. This dissonance may only have been brewing at the time but, less than ten years after his lecture, it was becoming manifest. Now it seems to be everywhere. It has become a global phenomenon. It is another harmful estrangement, the emergence of two cultures who hold one another in contempt. It is the palpable tension between an administrative elite and the people whom they govern or serve.²

We can perhaps see it best, or at any rate more clearly, in the universities. We can certainly see it in microcosm in Oxford, as in Bristol with which I am very familiar. I must say right away that I am not an Oxonian. I have never studied or taught in the University. I have been merely a visitor and I retain friends who are true Oxonians. I write here from a purely personal point of view because I persuade myself that non-partisan spectators in the grandstand sometimes see a game more clearly than participants on the field. Oxford, while having, of course, its own individual and specific battles and differences, is a case that may inform a study of the wider struggle in societies across the world.

You in Oxford are, I suggest, engaged in a local battle which is part of a greater war of the new ‘two cultures’. I see the same conflict everywhere: authoritarian bureaucrats (AB), who seem to know better than anyone about everything, are ranged against the creative and innovative and artistic talents (CIA) in the universities and in public life. The CIA and the general public who support them are classed as ‘little people’, ‘deplorables’ or ‘disruptive hooligans’ (‘minideps’ may be a convenient short label). Anyone not intimidated by the actions of AB – a person who might, for example, encourage new but disruptive ideas among students or who publishes independent thought – is placed in the category of ‘minidep’ whether he/she will or no. ABs control the patronage and promotions of many institutions. The loss of the power to create a career and a reputation by academic excellence alone illustrates the divide, the clash of the two cultures. It is deeply resented on the one hand (CIA) and stoutly defended on the other (ABs).³

Fons et Origo

The situation in universities is a sad conflict among people who should be working towards a common aim, what used to be called ‘The idea of the University’, ‘a concept of higher education and research evolved over a thousand years. That old concept is under severe challenge. Anyone who taught or studied in a British university, even twenty years ago, may well find little familiar in the groves of academe today. Everything – what is taught, how it is taught, and how people behave to, or think of, one another – has changed. How the University itself is run has changed. Most of Britain’s universities, and universities and institutions around the world, are changing. And all change, even change for the better, can often be seen as change for the worse.

Change and Decay

That sense of change and decay, that difference which we regret, may, however, not be a bad thing. To paraphrase Lucretius, ‘all change is the death of what has gone before’. Some things must die that other things can be born. While it is good that there are still people who study Greek and read the Bible critically, Oxford has undoubtedly benefited over the last century or so from also discovering the charm and excitement of disciplines like economics and evidence-based medicine.

Change can bring unpredicted and unexpected benefit. Oxford admitted women as full members of the University just over a hundred years ago. Scarcely twenty-five years after women became part of the University, Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin (arrived in Oxford 1928) managed, as a researcher, to do the work which brought her the Nobel Prize, and, as a tutor, she admitted to Somerville a student called Margaret Roberts (arrived in Oxford 1943) who later dominated the nation under her married name of Thatcher.

There is an important lesson for us all in the careers of Dorothy Hodgkin and Margaret Thatcher. It is this: we can count the heads of students as they enter or leave the University; we cannot know for more than twenty years what was inside those heads. We can also learn that change in, and of, itself is thus not something to be feared or resisted. It does, however, need to be understood. Change at the University level demands of us that we make choices, and they should be informed, and effective, choices if what succeeds is to be successful. That very simple fact requires us, before we can set out with hope and optimism for our next adventurous institutional change, to examine where we have come from.

Universities have always changed. The first universities (like Al Azhar in Cairo or the early Irish foundations in Europe) were voluntary associations of scholars. The senior members of the association were the teachers, and the junior members were what we now call students. Teachers taught what they alone thought or considered to be right, and they could choose to whom they might talk. Students heard of the great learning of specific teachers and presented themselves in the hope of gaining access.

Three basic freedoms were thus established:

- The right to teach what your own research and thinking had told you;
- The right to select your own students;
- On the students' side, the right to choose by whom they might be taught.

University freedom expressed itself in the very structure of institutions. If we leave aside the collegiate structure of Oxbridge and one or two other places, the typical constitution of British universities was derived from the notably democratic Scottish model. Academic matters (such as what should be taught and what research should be pursued) was governed by an assembly of senior teachers called professors. Business and financial matters were decided by a second chamber comprised of local businessmen and politicians who sat in deliberation with some representatives of the academic body. One was called 'Senate' and the other 'Council', but naming practice varied from university to university with respect to which was the academic body and which the financial. It was, overall, a good and flexible model.

Good as it was, the model did not generate enough funds to pay teaching and research staff and to educate students. Around 1889, when the Government of the day offered the proceeds of a whiskey tax, the British colleges and universities seized it avidly. The allocation of the money and the qualifying standard to receive it later became the work of the University Grants Committee (UGC). The UGC started off innocently enough as part of the Treasury and was later transferred to the Department of Education and Science. It not only paid for the universities; it effectively planned their future. That worked well enough because the direction of research and teaching and the selection of students still lay within the universities themselves. To receive Government support universities only had to show that what they offered was 'work of the University type'. Ministers, nominally in charge of university education and research, however, found that they had to answer in Parliament for behaviour and expenditure over which they had no control. They began to interfere as the numbers of universities increased in the 1960s. Shirley Williams – the daughter of one of Oxford's very first women graduates – produced *Thirteen Points* for the regulation of universities.

A few years later, a court decided that the relationship between the staff in a university and a student was contractual, not a voluntary association. At the same time, student unrest produced a change in the governing bodies. Students and junior teaching staff became members of the Senates and Councils of universities. As Ted Bell, Registrar of Reading University, said at the time, 'It was like giving bread rolls a say in the running of the bakery'.

But anxious ministers and the ABs of the Civil Service affected to believe that public money was still being spent without proper scrutiny. In the 1980s, Vice-Chancellors were forced to become 'Chief Accounting Officer' of their institutions – previously they had been 'Chief Academic Officer'. National Teaching and Research Assessments were introduced. Much research became directed by the power of the pound wielded by the research councils, organised since 2018 in a new public body, UKRI (UK Research and Innovation). Universities were also forced by financial pressure to admit students on bases which they themselves had not necessarily determined. Teachers could not decide whom they would teach, and students could have no real say in by whom and how they were to be taught.

Important internal relationships were handed over to a new national quango. 'The Office for Students', which promptly started to interfere between the teacher and the taught. Academic freedom – a hard won, and at times heroically maintained, feature of university life for a thousand years – gradually came to an end. The new external pressures produced changes in governance. The control of the institutions passed from the teachers to specialist managers and administrators. Universities had to take on more and more administrators to deal with the volumes of paperwork (like 'teaching assessments')⁵ and to create the often splendid new websites that the new national systems generated. Universities have ceased to be run by academic assemblies. Involving academic staff – trained to assess evidence and to think widely and deeply – in the running of a growing and complex university takes too much time. Even the direction of research has become more *dirigiste*. The large corporate bodies, which most universities became, require tightknit small groups of executives. Professional managers, not committees of scholars and researchers, take all the decisions.

To some, that has looked like progress. Staff, however, felt they had no control over their professional lives. Working for a university as a teacher or a researcher became more and more unpleasant. What they taught and what they researched became dominated by external pressure, much of it financial. None of this progress has obviously produced, or seems likely to produce, any tangible or demonstrable benefits. The UK has drifted closer to the EU model of a university where staff are often actually civil servants of a rather powerless variety. We cannot say with accuracy what research and scholarship has been lost or damaged by the change.⁶

There is, however, one crude measure of the past. The UK has more Nobel Laureates than virtually all Europe put together. It also has generated more patents and more spin-out new companies. A potent national, and sometimes very local, system which has delivered such benefits in the past is being slowly dismantled and replaced by pan-European research groups. The Scottish research-based university model ('teaching in the atmosphere of research') characteristic of British university life, have been eroded by the unrelenting battle for control by a range of 'offices', 'councils', and 'commissions' which decide what and who will be funded. The 'redbrick universities' have more or less succumbed. If the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge fail in their struggle to hang onto their endowments, the destruction will be complete, and a glory will have departed from the world.

Can we blame the new AB elites who run Oxford? Who

are they? How did they arise? They have their own interesting history. It began in 1855 when the Civil Service Commission was formed in Britain with the aim of 'shutting all the back doors to public employment' and 'throwing the public service open to all England'. Recruitment was to be by public examination. Administration of the country would no longer be the preserve of 'the unambitious, the indolent and the incapable'.⁷

It seemed like a good idea at the time – words which sadly and so often express justified retrospective regret. Disasters would be avoided and the Empire in all its aspects would be run by people (all men then) who were found by public examination to be of high intelligence. Practical achievement, it was thought, would flow from their intellectual steel. In China such a system had created a civil service whose benign rule lasted a thousand years. It all seemed like a very good thing – at the time.

But, of course, there are always unintended consequences. Those bright young men, joined after the two world wars by equally bright young women, became a potent force in society. By the end of the Nineteen Sixties, when the Robbins Report caused the vast and rapid expansion of the universities, a whole new element was discernible in society. Britain was effectively being run by an elite administrative class of mandarins rather than by its elected politicians. In the universities, the ancient open cloisters of scholars had become the 'corridors of power' of the bureaucrats. The contest between the new two cultures had been joined.

A modest proposal

Can anything be done to arrest and reverse the change and decay? I personally believe so. I have a modest proposal to make, and, for my inspiration, I turn to Ireland in the Eighteenth Century and two useful American managerial catch-phrases of more recent date – 'Management by Objective' and 'Getting a better bang for the buck'. Together they form the aims for a 'modest proposal' designed to make change more evidence-based. The term 'modest proposal' was used by Jonathan Swift for his Juvenalian satire about how to solve problems of starvation and over-population in Ireland.⁸ He suggested that babies should be born and raised as meat animals. High birth rates would thus reduce, and not create, starvation.

I am suggesting a way of enabling universities like Oxford to reach decisions about their future, a method of generating a conversation based on mutual respect between the two contemporary cultures. To achieve the objective, like any good managers, we all will have to ask what the purpose of the company/institution/university is. It is surely, in the case of Oxford, something like 'World-class research plus teaching, at a high level in the atmosphere of that research, the next generation of scholars and researchers and the future generation of national decision-makers in business and public affairs'. Think of the examples of Hodgkin and Thatcher. It is not that complicated. Even taxpayers can understand it. The most important element, the major asset (MA), which we need to help us attain that objective in the future, is the teaching and research staff plus those technicians and computer support people who make their work possible. There are other aspects of Oxford, like buildings and maintenance and finance and cleaning, which are vital but less impor-

tant or decisive in outcomes. We may term that aspect of the business of the University 'institutional support' (IS). The task of the managers (ABs) is to finance and order the community to produce the best result by assigning the greatest support to the major asset (MA-CIA) while preserving an adequate level of IS. Universities should be a better bargain for the taxpayer.⁹

We can manage that process in two ways. First, we can assign a percentage of our available cash and investment to MA and a percentage to IS. A study in Bristol University in the 1970s estimated MA to be 94% while IS was 6% (as measured by staff-salary-total cost – the Cost of Employment CE). The Bristol IS was possibly too low, but 8% might be acceptable as an initial target for good AB management.

An examination of CE offers us our second management tool – costing developments and change. The profit and loss, or the best outcome or return on investment, lies in the balance between MA and IS. It is clearly in the national and university interest that Oxford should invest as much as possible in MA, but the survival of the fabric of the University means it should also bear in mind the importance of IS. We need to know the right levels for each category.

We may take an example from industry. Many years ago, the Boeing Aircraft Company worried that they were spending too much on their IS, specifically maintenance. In a monitored management experiment, they stopped spending on maintenance altogether. When the main hangar doors stuck and prevented work, they had their answer. They were able to determine where the balance of such IS expenditure lay in advancing the company. Oxford, however, doesn't need to conduct that experiment again. It simply needs an agreed means of comparing values of two disparate activities, MA and IS.

That is why I suggest Oxford adopts the Pounds/Lecturer (written as £L). That is the core of our second management tool. We know that salary plus other employment costs, such as pension contributions, means that the average non-professorial member of the teaching and research staff perhaps costs Oxford in the order of £75000 per annum. The true figure can be precisely quantified. It can be calculated from actual detailed University statistics. When we have the properly quantified figure, we can write it as £L1.00. When an investment decision is needed – for example when it is proposed to employ more IS or AB staff, or to create a new building – the cost should be set out in £Ls. Oxford will then be able not only to forecast in advance the cost of new MA proposals but also what it is denying itself in MA by adopting an IS-based proposal. If, say, £L1000 is to be spent on an IS project, the University will know it has reduced its asset base by 1000 potential creators of its stock in trade, and indeed its investment in those who may create its future wealth from successfully exploited industrial projects. In the circumstances then prevailing, that may or may not be a good thing. A working group which includes CIA academics and AB administrators can decide, and if there is an element of doubt, the matter could be more widely canvassed among the members of the University. Democracy may still have its uses.

The sullen future

One sullen fact, however, remains. Universities – Oxford is sadly among them – face changes. If academic excellence and creative innovation is to last a while longer, and independent thought is still to flourish, questions like the balance between MA and IS do need to be faced. Change, when it comes, should be change for the better. It should be guided always by ‘the idea of the University’. That is, in essence, the challenge Oxford needs to meet. Answers which run counter to a convenient contemporary consensus may be required if the future imperfect ‘whither Oxford?’ is not to be translated into a present imperative ‘wither Oxford’.

¹ In his Rede Lecture, delivered in Cambridge in 1959.

² The alternative in verbs is symptomatic of the polarised nature of the problem.

³ As Bismarck remarked, one cannot allow the government of the house to rest with the nursery. Bureaucrats often think they are the ‘grown-ups’ while scholars behave like selfish and unruly children.

⁴ The title of Saint John Henry Newman’s thoughts on university education before becoming rector of University College Dublin. He advocated ‘freedom of thought’ tempered by ‘respect’ for religion – some say as a way of producing administrators for the Empire. ‘Freedom of thought’ and ‘mutual respect’ are, however, not bad starting points.

⁵ Students are not cigarettes or motor cars whose quality can be assessed on exit from the factory. University examiners can only say that the student has satisfied the examiners. How any knowledge gained may be used will not become manifest or applied for another twenty years. Similar caveats apply to research. Dorothy Hodgkin used to tell me that, if she had been assessed as late as a month before she discovered the structure of insulin, she would have had to report ten years and more of failure. When her final

experiment succeeded, she wandered round an evening Oxford, trying to find someone to tell who would understand what she had done and why it was significant. She found no one. She is also a good example of an ‘unruly person’. She was of the far Left politically and she and her husband were both Arabists. She was prominent in PUGWASH when that was seen as ‘Communist’ and today she would have been leading marches for Palestine. A past glory of Oxford could have been its greatest public and social media embarrassment today. How are such people to be managed?

⁶ EU financed research has been poor at finding and exploiting new ideas. The EU system of ‘foreground intellectual property’ and ‘background intellectual property’ makes investment and patent protection almost impossible. Successful Covid vaccines were not found by big groups of international EU researchers but by two Turks in Germany (Moderna and Pfizer) and the long-term virus group in Oxford (Astra-Zeneca).

⁷ See John Roach, *Public examinations in England 1850-1900*. Cambridge University Press, 1971 and E G W Bill, *University Reform in Nineteenth Century Oxford*, Oxford; Clarendon Press 1973

⁸ Swift (in 1729) was also wishing to stop Irish slaves and indentured labour (treated as slaves) being exported to the West Indies – the so-called ‘red legs’. Africans were not the only people to endure the ‘Atlantic trade’. And the Irish had the added problem of being enslaved by Africans. Slave traders from North Africa carried off all the inhabitants of the town of Baltimore in 1631. That danger continued well into the Eighteenth Century, perhaps even until 1830 when the power of the ‘Barbary Pirates’ was abridged.

⁹ We may note, in passing and as a caveat, that the BBC, funded by a license fee, is now composed predominately of administrators and engineers. Creative talent now resides in small independent companies who compete for funds decided by BBC AB ‘commissioners’. The NHS is said to spend about 40% of its budget on administration and networks of new satellite small companies are competing for funds allocated by AB NHS management. It is not clear that there are clinical benefits. In the BBC and the NHS, it seems that the fundamental purpose of the organisation is being defeated by the ABs who run it. Early reports seem to suggest that the Boeing Aircraft Company may also be suffering fatally from the same problem – a failure to fund MA and IS as result of different priority concerns of AB management. (See 737 MAX-9)

Not
the
Gazette

NB The *Oxford Magazine* is not an official publication of the University. It is a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University.

NOTICE

The Editors of the *Oxford Magazine* regret that they cannot publish any material submitted to them anonymously. If the author requests publication on the basis that the author’s name and university address be withheld from the readership, the Editors will consider the reasons given and in their discretion may publish on that basis; otherwise the material will be returned to the author.

A case for the defence

JULIAN PREECE

The Council for the Defence of British Universities (CDBU) was established at Oxford in 2012 by Sir Keith Thomas. He worked tirelessly to recruit famous names from culture and science, law and the media, as well as academe, and set up an organisational infrastructure in double quick time. Government was instituting radical plans for HE which did not look right, on which they had not consulted, and HE needed to do something in response. Oxford led for the sector and spoke for the country. Sir Keith's plans included an executive committee which thought through policies to argue that higher education was more than a commodity or 'private good'. The EC was overseen by Trustees and the CDBU registered as a not-for-profit company (our application for charitable status was rejected on the grounds that we were a lobbying organisation). Books and articles by Stefan Collini (in real life a scholar of English Literature) were essential reading at this time. Guest speakers at annual general meetings, held first at the British Academy, then for two years at the Athenaeum, inspired attendees, who came in their scores. Yet encouraging though it was to glimpse famous faces at these events, nothing much actually changed. I joined because of an original commitment to defend the SIVS (strategically important vulnerable subjects), which spoke to me as a scholar in German Studies emerging from a 'redundancy pool'. Shortly afterwards I was asked to represent Wales and I could not say no to that.

Sir Keith's initiative was in response to the third round of university fees brought in by the Coalition Government led by David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The fees represented an intensification of the programme of marketisation which had been gathering pace since the 1990s. Marketisation means that university degrees are traded as products which bring financial benefits to those who hold them in the form of the higher salaries they may command after graduation because they hold a degree. In the HE market universities are providers competing with one another for customers who consult league tables before deciding which product to buy, which in turn may vary in price according to their value. The law of markets dictates that there must be new entrants to disrupt tired practices and push no longer competitive providers out of business, thus driving innovation and improving efficiency. The economy benefits because competition raises the quality of the universities' products which are purchased by businesses when they employ graduates.

That is the theory. Architects of the scheme, such as David Willetts who spoke at a CDBU symposium last July, regret allowing providers to charge the same fee, which he had not foreseen would happen. According to the law of markets products are priced according to their value (in this case the salary you earn after graduation), but by all demanding £9000 British universities defied that law and thus in a way bucked the market. However, the market was strengthened in 2015 when government removed student number controls. As headteachers are judged by

how many pupils they can send to Russell Group universities, this move allowed the Russell Group to expand but has led to a reduction in the offer elsewhere. This is hitting the Humanities hard, which as a group of subjects were derided by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak as 'low value' in the summer of 2023.

The Cameron-Clegg fees were not mentioned in either party's manifesto at the election in 2010, with the Lib Dems even pledging to oppose any increase. The first wave of fees, just £1000 per year and paid upfront, were brought in by Tony Blair in 1999 following recommendations made by the Dearing Report commissioned by the previous Conservative administration. These fees were not trailed in a manifesto either but supported by both main parties. Nor was the second wave, the so-called 'top-up fees' which trebled the rate to £3000 at the beginning of Labour's second term.

The Cameron-Clegg fees represented a quick fix for universities which in 2012 suddenly found they had the resources they needed to teach and research. As the fees were repayable as loans they did not show up in public borrowing, thus passing the test of austerity economics. But they were controversial from the start and sparked levels of civil unrest by students not seen since the anti-Poll Tax riots a generation earlier. Their unpopularity with the electorate has surely been the prime reason they have increased only once in England. As a result, more than ten years later and in an era of relatively high inflation, universities now face another crisis of financing. The market is failing, but in a market, it is producers who set the prices, not the government.

There are other reasons that university financing has not been addressed and they are probably intertwined. It is the Conservative view that mind-sets denoted as 'woke' and associated with equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) originated in universities. As 'wokery' is de facto bad, universities must take the blame for commencing a 'culture war' with the rest of society. Since the terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and Israel's all-out response in Gaza, Conservative politicians have sought to exploit upset on campus by characterising universities as places of antisemitism. In December they were energised by the Congressional hearings in the US which led to the resignations of two prominent university leaders, who apparently failed to distance themselves sufficiently from contentious definitions of campus hate speech. We commissioned a blog by David Feldman, Director of the Birkbeck Institute of the Study of Antisemitism, who drew nuanced distinctions to assist in the adjudication of cases (<https://cdbu.org.uk/antisemitism-and-criticism-of-israel>). Promoting academic values surely entails drawing on research expertise to make difficult judgements.

Culture-war tactics have not recently born much fruit for UK politicians. Research for the CDBU by Leo McCann from York University ('Satisfied customers? Interrogat-

ing “the student experience” in the neoliberal university’ suggests that most students see the free speech on campus controversy to be ‘deliberately overblown by right-wing commentators’. But that controversy came after the big fees hike and is linked with wider politics. What was the EU referendum in 2016 except a vote against higher education, with all our cross-border networks and international collaborators?

Has the CDBU achieved what it set out to do? At the elections of 2017 and 2019, the main party of opposition was committed to abolishing fees altogether across the UK (they were never introduced at all in Scotland for Scottish students). The 2019 election was not only about membership of the EU or the terms of British exit from it. It was also about the financing of HE. With the defeat of Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour, some founders concluded that the CDBU had failed by this point, but a majority on the Executive Committee determined to continue. The question of financing remains key and we do not have an answer.

What is the CDBU defending? Our aims say that it is ‘the autonomy of institutions of higher education against interference by government or other external bodies’. We also promise to ‘stem the rising tide of managerialism in universities and restore the role of academic values in university governance’. Academic freedom has been a recent preoccupation, prompted by the Kathleen Stock case at the University of Sussex which has been followed by prominent cases at other institutions, including recently Bristol and the Open University. Dr Kelli Rudolph (Kent) was lead author of a position paper and model ordinance, which you can read here: <https://cdbu.org.uk/academic-freedom>. A pre-Socratic philosopher Dr Rudolph has

adapted her research training to become an expert in the contemporary field of where academics’ responsibilities begin and end on campus and in wider society.

* * *

The CDBU has recently deployed some reserves (accumulated from members’ subscriptions) to fund research. Our view that we would empower academics by inviting them to choose their own themes caused confusion: usually it is the funder who decides the theme and the applicant who must find out what that funder ‘is looking for’. The project led by Professor Steve Jones (Manchester) on the secretive world of university governing bodies, ‘University governance: views from the inside’, provoked a rebuttal on WonkHE from the executive chair of the Committee of University Chairs John Rushforth within days of publication, surely proof that Steve’s findings hit a raw nerve. Many of our members are veterans of disputes with senates and similar bodies and have set up a new working party to devise a blueprint for what a university council should look like and what its role should be, *vis-à-vis* the senior leadership team, the wider institution and the communities which both serve.

* * *

The CDBU was born in Oxford and still needs input from Oxford academics. We fund research, curate a blog, organise symposia, and lobby on behalf of all British universities. If your views align with ours, consider joining. Better still share your expertise to argue for an alternative model for higher education in Britain.

The Chancellor

Sir – We surely all wish Lord Patten the very best for his richly-deserved retirement in the year of his forthcoming 80th birthday. As Gill Evans rightly notes in this issue “...he has been a very visible Chancellor” and one, as the Vice-Chancellor highlighted in her announcement, of “an extraordinarily active and committed Chancellor.. tirelessly championing Oxford at home and abroad.”

Interestingly, I took up my own position here as Statutory Chair in Inorganic Chemistry at almost the same time as Lord Patten became Chancellor. Sadly I think I only had the pleasure – and it was a pleasure – of one ‘social’ encounter with him during

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this 20+ year period. That was an inter-promptu meeting close to the Kings Arms one evening when our paths crossed – well almost collided – when access to Broad Street was limited (I can’t recall why) and

we found ourselves huddled together in a throng attempting to navigate through crowds.

Reading Lord Patten’s and the V-C’s announcement one realises how hugely successful his period has been in terms of a most important time for Oxford University

Lord Patten’s considerable success also surely reflects the great strengths of any system at Oxford that allows for the accumulated wisdom, talent and experience of us all to be richly utilised until our late 70’s

Yours sincerely,

PETER P EDWARDS

Department of Inorganic Chemistry

Molasses, or the Seduction of Boston

"Everything a Bostonian touched was sticky."

- Eyewitness account of the Boston Molasses Disaster, January 1919, in which a storage tank burst, flooding the streets of Boston with 2.3 million US gallons of molasses, resulting in 21 deaths.

I am not water – no drinker-up of forms,
nor do I run sleekly off what touches me.
I have a body. Thickness and desire
make me dark and sweet.

What language is there for this feeling of flesh?
The word I was given was *steel* –
a corset of brackets, beam-boned,
that unrelated me to a weak interruption,
a catch in the city's breath.
I wanted to drown it.

Tide untugged by moon, self-stirred
by prolonged fermentation –

In that rigid womb I dreamed without image
of myself: infinite alloyed sweetness
who sought only tongues to blacken.
Who could blame my incubation of a rupture?

Around me Boston churned and gulped –
America's mouth. Industrial molars
gnashed and worried the ocean-teat,
and I, suspended, unswallowed candy-stone.

By minute degree the tension slacked. I dripped
into the upraised cups of wives.
They stole me home in bits, like gossip,
darkening their cakes.

As Christmas passed,
my stilled desire stormed inside my flanks,
which, billowing, cracked their belt
and slow unbuckled: unforced birth.

I shirked my holdings, raw and yolkish, slipped,
knowing no skin, but like a nervous lung,
pulsed and sweated:
general as night and omnidilating.

My hunger now unlippped,
I was fat and slow and dangerous,

like leather-water
as I went waltzing over Boston.
I slipped the men and horses
beneath the massy hood of my desire,
the quivering circle of my body
all-occluding.

I knew with my dark intelligence
each orifice,
thinning the walls
between lung and stomach,

agitating in the depthly cling
an amniotic indiscrimination:
men unmade to glazey clay,
form dissolved in abundance.

I made vicious suck,
unprincipled as a baby.
They could not pluck the dying from my pores,
and those unstuck were glossed with my embraces,
their faces unreadable.

They had to jilt me, unpri my clasping drench,
but I, who was all insides, could not be wounded.
It was salt, whose hygiene and sucking blankness,
at last frosted an eczematous crust
that lapped me in its parching logic.
I lisped and fizzed my shame,
prostrate in the thoroughfare:
my first taste of sharpness.
The men scraped me off the stone,

puking wreckage to the harbour.
There I cloyed the sea, dulled the prows,
glistened on the touchy surface,
twitching cursive, impossible to parse,
floated up an insubstantial isle,
swilling around some inarticulate question,
the smell of me still rising in the street.

ISOBEL FALK

Isobel Falk is an Anglo-Canadian writer based in London. She is interested in queerness, cinema, and the Gothic. She is a graduate of Oxford University and a recipient of the Tower Poetry Prize.

Beyond Ashkelon

*'We pass the orange groves
surrounded by cypresses
against the wind.'**

Eyeless in Gaza
is not a fancy any more
than Ashkelon
is a dream.

The impossible route
between the two,
13 kilometres
as the mapmakers
say, careful to note
the best way away.

BRUCE ROSS-SMITH

* Anthony Rudolf 'The Road to Ashkelon', in *European Hours: Collected Poems* (Carcanet, 2017)

Bruce Ross-Smith is a Vancouver Island-born, Oxford-based semi-retired lecturer who for decades now has lived with his family on the slopes (pollution and all) of Headington Hill. In December 2022 five of his poems were published in 'Poems on Conflict', Chough Press, Oxford.

Revising the *Gazette*?

G.R.EVANS

How far is the *Oxford University Gazette* serving its purpose? Indeed, can it lay claim to a purpose beyond preserving the historical record of the *Acta* of Congregation now that it has rivals offering a broader content in the form of a *University Bulletin* circulated by email to ‘all-staff’, with a lengthy list of assorted ‘newsletters’ listed online.¹

The *Gazette*’s current website provides a link to a poem ‘Lines to an old friend’ by A.D. Godley (Oxford’s Public Orator from 1910–20), in his *Lyra Frivola* of 1899. This wryly accepted that the still-young *Gazette* was doing a necessary if tedious duty. Christopher Ricks, then Oxford’s Professor of Poetry, read it in his Creweian Oration in 2007. It contrasts the heat and ‘continual alarms’ of the press with ‘the pacifying page of the *Oxford University Gazette*’, its ‘banquet of unmitigated fact’ in ‘satisfying prose’ and ‘academic calm’. Here were ‘the columns where there’s nothing to attract, Or the interest to waken and to whet’.²

So the *Gazette* did not begin as an attractively-resigned ‘read’ to be seized upon with interest each week. The first issue appeared on 28 January 1870, with a Preliminary Notice promising that it would be published every Tuesday in term-time and more frequently if University business demanded it. Its ‘official notices’ would be posted in the buttery of every college or hall and sent personally to those the Statutes required to be notified. The *Gazette* itself would also be delivered without charge to every member of Congregation. Others could order it and pay a subscription.

This new publication was promptly reviewed on February 5 in the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*. ‘The ancient University of Oxford, not content with keeping the whole nation well supplied with scholarship, boating sciences, and heresies, has made a venture into journalism’,³ it said. It thought this ‘no undergraduate freak’ (for such publications were being tried at the time) but the publication of the ‘Alma Mater herself’. Here ‘all the world’ could read ‘academic utterances’ which could formerly be read only on notice-boards in the University and its colleges. Here was ‘a calendar of University doings for the coming week’, with Sundays and saints’ days in Gothic type. The reviewer wonders whether ‘Festivals and Fasts would be so conspicuously announced’ in a number for the corresponding week of January 1970. (They were not.)

It was explained that the order was always to be the same: Acts and Agenda of Convocation and those of Congregation, Professors’ Lectures, University Examinations, Prizes, University Notices (general), College Notices, unofficial notices. Legislative acts of Convocations were recorded in Latin, which permitted commendable brevity. There was praise for the practice of amending legislation by removing a section to be changed and substitution a new one so that it can clearly be seen what has happened.⁴ Additions to this straightforward recording of *Acta* were celebrated. The ‘Ancient House of Congre-

gation’ has awarded degrees, the *Review* notes, but this week there had been no debating in the Sheldonian Theatre, ‘the modern debating House’. The Professors’ lectures spread a ‘feast’, and while the ‘intelligence’ of listeners would be flooded with ‘the whitest light’ their ‘moral nature would be ‘refined, by the gardens and towers and chapels of that enchanted city’.

It was suggested that the menu the *Gazette* offered could be longer. ‘An outsider’ would not get a clear ‘idea of the number of Chairs at Oxford’. It is hinted that it would be altogether more satisfactory to have a complete list of Professors and the Lectures they are or are not giving, and a more systematic relating of their subjects to the curriculum. That compared unfavourably with what might be expected in a German university. In other respects perhaps the *Gazette* was being too generous with its information. The reviewer notes that ten years ago no private lectures or classes would be listed as provided by an MA who had ‘no further University sanction for his liberty of prophesying than’ his MA degree. Now there seemed to be volunteered lecturing some of which had ‘strayed’ to the section ‘devoted to the professorial courses’. However the reviewer would have liked something to ‘relieve the business-like character of the body of the paper.’

‘Few could fail to be both amused and instructed by seeing some specimens of the refined irony with which the pen-and-ink battles of the Dons are carried on.’

Nevertheless, ‘every Oxford man who wishes to keep himself *en rapport* with his old University’ should ‘make a point of seeing’ the *Gazette*.⁵

The *Gazette* of 20 September 1990 was the first issue in a ‘new A4 format’, with ‘some sections reorganized for the sake of clarity or economy’. A ‘new illustrated news section’ was ‘intended to promote the wider circulation of matters of general interest in the University’. As the University’s organ of historical record since 1870, the *Gazette* is still required to carry certain information, now published openly to the world online.⁶ First and foremost it must record the *Acta* of Congregation, and on the rare occasions (elections of the Chancellor and the Professor of Poetry) when it still does business, those of Convocation. When Congregation is offered a Resolution to approve, that must be published as the agenda for its next meeting. If the Resolution concerns a Statute, Congregation must actually meet but other Regulations are simply published as already made or amended by Council and its committees, with the information that a debate may be triggered by two members of Congregation informing the Registrar of opposition. That is rarely needed and the *Gazette* then publishes acceptance of the Resolution with its date. Additions to the Register of Congregation must be published, and also the results of Congregation, Convocation, divisional and faculty board elections.

There is a website on ‘getting something published’⁷

in the *Gazette* beyond this category of its historical record-keeping, normally at a request on behalf of the University or a college. There is a comprehensive list of such categories: appointments; awards and prizes; calls for papers; college fellowship elections; conferments of title;⁸ courses and training (at the discretion of the editors); examination regulations; exhibitions; funding opportunities; higher degrees;⁹ lectures, seminars, workshops; musical events; obituaries; recognition of distinction; vacancies; visiting professorships, *viva voce* examinations. The *Gazette* also publishes 'Consultative Notices'. Should an individual reader of the *Gazette* wish to ensure that it carries a wider variety of information, that can be arranged. A list of 'classified advertisements' now includes 'paid for' privately requested items.

The *Gazette* has recently become much more of a pleasure to read, made visually attractive in its layout, making use of colour and pictures. The categories of content are easy to see and the detail easy to find by clicking a link. This has been made possible by the decision of the General Purposes Committee and Council in Michaelmas term 2020 not to return to print publication after print copies were abandoned during the 'Covid19' crisis. However that has been part of broader change in modes of internal and external communication in the University's affairs because so much can now be done digitally. An extensive range of information is now available in other 'ox.ac.uk' publications.

The *University Bulletin* (with cross-reference to the *Gazette*) replaced *Blueprint*, as a fortnightly 'all-staff' internal 'round-up of news and activities from across the collegiate University'.¹⁰ Its content varies, from personal Blogs to Notices of events. For example the issue of 22 January included an update on the Pay and Conditions review from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital), Notices of the Romanes Lecture; the Vice-Chancellor's International Womens' Day Event; a section on Education and Teaching including comments from Astrophoria students; an update on the problems experienced with the undergraduate admissions test provider this year; under 'Research and Innovation' invitation to mid-career researchers looking to develop their leadership and project management skills and news of successful research to protect hedgehogs from lawnmowers; with a miscellaneous collection under 'You and Oxford'.

The *University Bulletin* has been free to shape itself, but to meet the needs of 'all-staff' it has a focus on professional and administrative staff in an essentially 'managerial' structure. It is assumed that 'all-staff' are line-managed and they are warned to consider who they 'need to loop in' in offering a contribution. A prospective contributor should 'speak to your relevant communication lead for input and to ensure that your communication activities are properly aligned with your division/department/unit's overall communication plans'.¹¹

Editorial responsibility lies with the Internal Communications team. Inviting feedback and suggestions for inclusion, it says 'we continually review the performance of the *University Bulletin* and its content, including seeking the views of colleagues from across the University'. The Communications team can provide a contribution guide. 'Please email us (universitybulletin@admin.ox.ac.uk) and we will share it with you.' It suggests that 'your item may be better suited' to one of the other 'newsletters'. 'The *University Bulletin* typically doesn't include lo-

cal-level news, event promotion, business-as-usual items and content that isn't staff-focused'. Nevertheless, the tone of the *Bulletin* tends to the cosy. 'Hear from Kay', Read Anne's message' 'Hear from Bill' invite the reader to 'learn more'.¹²

It is impossible to say how the readerships of the globally-available online *Gazette* and the all-staff *Bulletin* may compare and how many regularly read both. That early reviewer may have thought 'the Professors' lectures spread a "feast" in the Sheldonian, that 'modern debating House'. However for decades the regular detailed record of what was actually said in the exchange of views commonly consisted of coverage not in the *Gazette*, but in the independent *Oxford Magazine* which began publication a decade after it began. Until 2005, although the outcomes of votes were published, the speeches made in debates at meetings of Congregation were published in the *Gazette* only when a matter had proved especially controversial. An example was a *Supplement*, recording Congregation's rejection of a proposal to establish the new Said Business School on the Mansfield Rd. site.¹³ Debates are now always published verbatim, adding significantly to the range of content of the *Gazette*.

The question remains how far the *Gazette* can or should extend the range of its content to capture the attention of those busy readers who have a *Bulletin* arriving in their inboxes several times a Term. The *Gazette* is not protected or constrained by the University's Statutes and Regulations. This makes a contrast with the *Cambridge University Reporter*, which also began publication in 1870, with the same purpose of creating a historical record of the University's business and which has reported the remarks made in Discussions from the end of the nineteenth century (though in reported speech until the mid-twentieth century).

The *Reporter* has a place in the University's Statutes and Ordinances which prescribe that it shall contain 'in its official part, University Notices issued by authority' and 'in its unofficial part'. That part includes (verbatim) the remarks made a Discussions, 'notices of non placet of Graces, signed by persons entitled to vote; notices, not authorized for inclusion in the official part, of lectures and other instruction; notices sent by Colleges; notices and reports of learned societies connected with the University; and such advertisements as the Registry may think fit to insert'.¹⁴

In its time the *Reporter* has had a *Letters* page and other additions but now its issues are divided into the two required parts.¹⁵ The *Reporter* thus accepts short items from internal and affiliated Cambridge institutions and societies only, published free of charge and at the discretion of the Editor¹⁶ (who may admit some 'external' notices, usually Oxford University Vacancies).¹⁷ It lacks a counterpart to the wide-ranging paid-for advertisements in the *Gazette* which may include such personal items as houses and books for sale. Cambridge has no counterpart to Oxford's *University Bulletin*.

The *Reporter* has not yet experimented with redesigning the way it looks. It still appears without colour or illustration and in the traditional modern format. The proposal in 2011 to end print publication was discussed (as Oxford's counterpart decision to publish the *Gazette* online in 2020 was not). The Cambridge decision meant a change of Ordinance, required a *Report* to the University, and needed the Regent House to approve the change with

a Grace (it did).¹⁸ A speaker argued that ‘the *Reporter* and the *Oxford Gazette* are to the two universities what the *London Gazette* and the publication of Bills and Acts of Parliament are to the Government’. Another feared that a digital-only publication would be easy to modify, making it difficult to ensure archiving of each issue. There were, as with the *Gazette*, potential uncertainties about the preservation of additional material linked with a URL, which ceased to work while remaining in a print copy on the record.¹⁹

However there have been recent stirrings towards the suggestion that it is time for rethinking. In a Discussion this academic year a speaker expressed concerns that ‘a hypothetically more ‘dynamic’ digital format which perhaps I infer from the 28th *Report of the Board of Scrutiny* as being potentially in the works’ would make the contents of the *Reporter* no longer ‘stable, fixed and therefore authoritative, both now and also for any future readers’. He also considered it an advantage that ‘the weekly publication schedule avoids the need to check regularly for more frequent updates’. ‘Discrete volumes and issues’, he argued, makes it a much easier publication with which to keep up to date.²⁰ Responding on this point the Council now ‘notes early exploration of possible changes to the format of the *Reporter*’ but is vaguely reassuring, specifically ‘that there are no plans to change the publication schedule of the *Reporter*. As now, items published between issues would be republished in the next weekly issue during term.’²¹

So Cambridge, despite the fetters imposed by its place in the *Ordinances*, may now begin to consider modernising its journal of historical record. The *Gazette* has taken a lead in doing so. The most useful further improvement would be a means of searching the complete corpus of past online issues without considerable effort in accessing and downloading. To search the *Reporter*’s whole online content for a word or phrase from 1997-8 takes a moment.²² The *Gazette* could usefully be made easier to search.

In the case of both the *Gazette* and the *Reporter* there are reasons to think that an online-only version has a lower readership. The Editors of both send a reminder by email on publication if requested. The question is whether that is as effective in making one promptly turn the pages as did the arrival of a print copy in one’s pigeon-hole.

The visibility of each University’s central bodies in its organ of historical record differs because of their contrasting constitutions. Oxford’s Council comes first in the *Gazette* with considerable frequency as its new Regulations and those of its Committees are published, and it publishes new members of Congregation. But unless members of Congregation demand a Meeting the Regulations come into force without its active participation. Cambridge’s Council appears in a high proportion of *Reporters*, either publishing a *Report to the University* with ‘Recommendations’ or a Notice in response to remarks made in the ensuing Discussion, accompanied by a Grace for the Regent House to approve or not. This is a consequence of the difference in the way the sovereign bodies of the two Universities enact their legislation, because Cambridge’s Council cannot itself create legislation. An important difference is that, whereas in Cambridge the sovereign democratic body directly and iteratively influences Council policy-making, in Oxford Congregation in practice merely accepts - by default - decisions handed down to it by Council.

The two Vice-Chancellors have no regular place in *Gazette* or *Reporter*. Their relations with their respective sovereign bodies have to be cultivated informally as they choose. Oxford’s Vice-Chancellor has been active during her first year in sending termly or more frequent messages, with both a video version and a readable text. Cambridge’s newer Vice-Chancellor has so far been silent and has not attempted to send messages to her planet since she came into office on 5 July last year beyond introducing herself in the very first days.

¹ <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/working-at-oxford/publications-and-newsletters>

² <https://gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/lines-old-friend>

³ *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 29 (745), 192-3.

⁴ *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 29 (745), 192-3.

⁵ *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 29 (745), 192-3.

⁶ Except for names of individuals accessible because of data protection requirements only through SSO.

⁷ <https://gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/submitting-items-publication>

⁸ Excluding FRS and FBA.

⁹ Information supplied by the Research Degrees team.

¹⁰ <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/working-at-oxford/staff-news-and-events/university-bulletin>

¹¹ <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/article/what-is-bulletin>

¹² <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/news-staff>

¹³ *Gazette*, 1996-7 and see *Oxford Magazine* No. 323, 0th Week TT 2012.

¹⁴ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/pdfs/2023/Cambridge-Statutes-and-Ordinances-2023.pdf>

¹⁵ [Reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk](https://reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk)

¹⁶ Formally the Registry though there is a *Reporter* Editor and a UAS team with responsibility for the actual editing.

¹⁷ <https://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

¹⁸ <https://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6217/section8.shtml#heading2-19>

¹⁹ <https://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6220/section12.shtml>

²⁰ *Reporter*, 8 November.

²¹ *Reporter*, 24 January.

²² <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/cgi-bin/search.cgi>

A reverie

Then I entered a large windowless chamber, which I half recognised as my own. Shadowy forms moved slowly and settled in the gloom. In the far corner sat Sigmund Freud, holding in one hand a magnifying glass, in the other a skull. He kept mumbling into his beard – something about words edging along a sliding scale of difference, till they become the opposite of what they appear to mean. Facing him was Hélène Cixous, angular but serene, eyes like a sphinx, stroking a black cat which morphed into an androgynous child. What she said was half in English, half in French, and I heard it as a prose poem. On a table between them was an immense closed book made of stone, on the front cover of which these words were chiselled: ‘the author is dead, look no further’. Roland Barthes was there, but only intermittently; he spoke in riddles which the others understood. Uncle Tel (Terry Eagleton) kept appearing from an inner room, handing out fizz and canapés. He talked quietly with a slight lilt, expressing hope, and shrugged his shoulders when the others spoke.

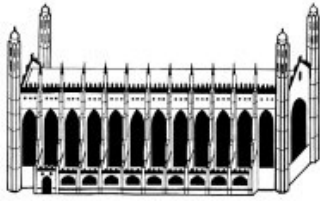
I listened for a long time until the four voices mingled into a steady solemn susurrant. Then I left the room, walked downstairs, and passed through the archway from the front quad into the graveyard. There I found one of my students draped over a tomb in the midday sun. She was weeping as she read a poem by Keats: ‘This living hand, now warm and capable...’ I walked on, under the yew-trees.

Directions

On the main road, take the first left
after the sign LOST CAUSES HOME.
Keep going till you reach the roundabout.
Here, stay in the middle lane,
taking the second left
till you reach a junction.
For THEORY WARS, turn left again.
Ignore all people waving flags
and all signs leading to thickets.
Enjoy the view when you arrive
at PSYCHOANALYSIS,
but don’t dally; time is short
and there’s still some way to go.
MARXISM and FEMINISM
are off the beaten track; both sharp left.
You’ll need to see the lie of the land there, surely?
After that, stick to the road,
which goes steeply downhill,
stopping at DECONSTRUCTION if you must
for a comfort break and sandwiches –
then keep going
till you wind up in a cul de sac.
Here, with no choices left,
you must go back.
The main road, clearly signposted,
leads to NEW HISTORICISM –
it veers left, then right, then left again.
Braking hard, take a deep breath
and look around.
There’s a winding, pot-holed lane with no name
that leads to a long stretch of moorland:
for this, take the second turning, right.
Eventually, following signposts
erected by the National Trust
to ECOLOGY, you’ll find yourself
stranded by the sea,
where your car will stop.
Not a petrol station in sight.
Here, open a book and watch the waves come in.
This is CLOSE READING,
where all along you should have been.

LUCY NEWLYN

Lucy Newlyn, Emeritus Fellow in English at St Edmund Hall, has published widely on English Romanticism. Her most recent poetry collection is *Quicksilver* (Lapwing, 2022), which was written partly in Oxford and partly in Cornwall, where she now lives.



Notes from Cambridge

Announcements that both Oxford and Cambridge are to lose their Chancellors this year came within a week of each other at the beginning of February. The resignation of Lord Patten ahead of his eightieth birthday was announced on 5 February with his letter to the Vice-Chancellor and her grateful thanks to him all published, including a video. The announcement that Lord Sainsbury intended to resign as Cambridge's Chancellor had come a few days earlier, on 2 February. The announcement took the form of a brief online Advance Notice in the *Cambridge University Reporter*. This simply stated that 'the Vice-Chancellor gives notice that the Lord Sainsbury of Turville has advised her of his intention to step down later this year from his office as Chancellor of the University'. *The Reporter* of 7 February added no further comment. A much fuller account was speedily published by *Varsity*.

The Cambridge announcement noted that 'the Council will publish a timetable for the election of a successor once the Chancellor has formally submitted his resignation to the University, which is expected to be in the Easter Term'. In Oxford the electorate for a successor as Chancellor comprises the membership of Convocation and in Cambridge the membership of its counterpart, the Senate, allowing many of us to vote in both elections.

There is a history of disagreement about the way in which a body as enormous as Cambridge's Senate may take a vote. (Oxford found it could successfully organise voting for Convocation in the last election of the Professor of Poetry.) Lord Sainsbury was elected as Chancellor in 2011 and in 2014 the Cambridge University Council set up a working group to review the procedure for future elections. Its recommendations were submitted for approval in a *Report* in July 2014. These proved controversial in the ensuing Discussion of the Senate and the Graces were withdrawn by the Vice-Chancellor on 25 July to avoid a vote having to be taken. The use of a Nomination Board had been questioned. The use of a Transferable Vote also attracted criticism.

As it happens Cambridge's Senate has just updated the mode of its vote-taking. A Grace was submitted to the Senate on 17 January and declared to have been approved in the *Reporter* on 31 January. This Grace had been preceded in the usual way with a *Report* (dated 10 November) and a Discussion of the Senate on 5 December. The result is a new Ordinance including the removal of the Nomination Board and the replacement of the Single Transferable Vote voting system with 'first past the post'.

Regulation 10 of the Ordinance for Graces of the Senate will now read:

'In a ballot of the Senate voters shall cast their votes in person or electronically. The Council determines the timetable of the ballot, including the days and hours of voting, and the arrangements for registration of voters voting electronically. Voting will normally take place during Full Term, with voting opening between

fourteen and twenty-eight days after publication of the Notice announcing the ballot, unless the Council decides to postpone the ballot to allow an election of the Chancellor or the High Steward to take place first. Voting in person will take place on two days, which need not be consecutive. One of the days for in-person voting will be a Saturday. Voting electronically will take place on ten consecutive days, to overlap with at least one of the days appointed for voting in person.'

So this is going to be the first election of a Cambridge Chancellor conducted under the resulting new Ordinance. The Council will determine the timetable for the election, which will be published in the *Reporter* together with 'information on the arrangements for registration of voters voting electronically and the accepted methods for submitting nominations'.

What do the Chancellors do?

In both Oxford and Cambridge the Chancellors hold an office which was created alongside those of the Proctors when the Universities began. The first Chancellors had a judicial function. It was some centuries before either University created Vice-Chancellorships and the responsibilities of their Chancellors faded into little more than the ceremonial.

The Chancellors' modern responsibilities are defined in their University's Statutes, though in practice the modern Chancellors may largely make what they choose of their role. Patten has been a very visible Chancellor in Oxford, Sainsbury less so in Cambridge, though he has visited departments and faculties one or twice a term.

Cambridge's Statutes list the Chancellor's tasks in Statute A,1(3-6). The Chancellor 'shall have power to call Congregations of the Regent House, and to admit candidates to degrees and titles of degrees'. The Chancellor 'shall have power to see that all officers of the University duly perform their duties'. The Chancellor 'shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by Statute or Ordinance' and 'if the office of Chancellor is vacant, the duties and powers of the Chancellor which are not otherwise allocated by Statute or Special Ordinance to the Vice-Chancellor shall be discharged by the High Steward (or the Deputy High Steward)'. Cambridge's Chancellor also remains formally a member of its Council along with the Vice-Chancellor, and has the right to take the chair at any meeting of the Council 'at which he or she chooses to be present', though Lord Sainsbury has not chosen to attend Council meetings.

Since the *University of Cambridge Act* of 1856 the Chancellor has an additional role which has no counterpart for Oxford. It still remains with the Cambridge Chancellor to determine any question of interpretation of the University's statutes, as that Act and its successors in 1877 and 1923 requires. Lacking Visitors, neither Oxford

nor Cambridge University had any inbuilt provision for that purpose.

The current wording of Statute A,IX,2 imports much of the wording of *Oxford and Cambridge Act* (1877) s.52 which was incorporated into that 1923 Act as a Schedule:

'If any doubt arises as to the true meaning of any Statute of the University, or of any Statute for the University and any one or more of the Colleges in common, the Council may apply to the Chancellor, who shall then declare in writing the meaning of the Statute in question, and such declaration shall be registered by the Registry of the University, and the meaning of the Statute as therein declared shall be deemed the true meaning thereof. The University shall defray the cost of any legal advice obtained by the Chancellor for the performance of his or her duty under this section.'

Competition for the Chancellorships

The lack of fully defined powers has not meant that these high-profile offices have not been hotly contended for in recent centuries. Prince Albert, elected in 1847, faced controversy because Fellows of St. John's College preferred one of their own members, the Earl of Powis. But the Earl was a Tory and that threatened to give the election a flavour of party politics. Prince Albert, free of party allegiance, had had to be persuaded to stand (largely by William Whewell, Master of Trinity College). He proved interventionist and had his own 'German' ideas about the purpose and proper constitution of a University in a period when the introduction of research in German universities was actively being discussed.

Cambridge faced a politically contested election again in 1925 after Alfred Milner, Viscount, elected unopposed, died before he could be installed. The candidates to replace him included the Liberal Herbert Asquith, who had chaired the Royal Commission which had led to the *Oxford and Cambridge Act* (1923) and was at first thought to be the natural choice. His opponent was the Conservative George Cave, then Lord Chancellor. He beat Asquith 987:441 in what became a largely party-political contest. Cambridge gained a second Queen's consort for its Chancellor in the Duke of Edinburgh, who served from 1976-2011.

In 2011, Cambridge's Senate elected its new Chancellor from among four candidates, including an actor and a local grocer, with either a barrister or Lord Sainsbury, another politician and a major benefactor to the University

expected to win. Sainsbury was the winner in an excited flurry of media coverage.

The Chancellor as a College Visitor

Both Chancellors act as Visitors to a number of their University's colleges. In Oxford the Chancellor is Visitor to Hertford, LMH, Mansfield, Pembroke, St. Edmund Hall and Somerville. In Cambridge rather more of its colleges have the Chancellor as their Visitor: Christ's, Clare, Corpus, Fitzwilliam, Homerton, Hughes Hall, Lucy Cavendish, Newnham, Robinson and Wolfson.

The Visitation role of Chancellors, like that of all Visitors, was restricted by the Higher Education Act of 2004 ss.20 and 46 which removed the jurisdiction of Visitors in student complaints and staff disputes respectively. It has left College Visitors with any powers they had in relation to the Statutes of colleges – however, these have not all been updated. For example, the Statutes of Christ's College Cambridge have not been updated beyond the provisions of the *Education Reform Act* of 1988.

It remains to be seen how smoothly the election of the next Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge will proceed.

G. R. EVANS

¹ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2024-02-05-lord-patten-barnes-announces-his-retirement-chancellor-university-oxford>

² <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/27006#:~:text=The%20Chancellor%20of%20Cambridge%2C%20Lord,is%20a%20mostly%20ceremonial%20role.>

³ *Cambridge University Reporter*, 14 May 2014.

⁴ *Reporter*, 15 November, 2023.

⁵ *Reporter*, 15 November, 2023.

⁶ Oxford, Statute IX, I(1), Cambridge Statute A, I (1-6).

⁷ Statute A, IV, 2.

⁸ Statute A, IV, 5 (a)

⁹ Statute A, IX, 2.

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